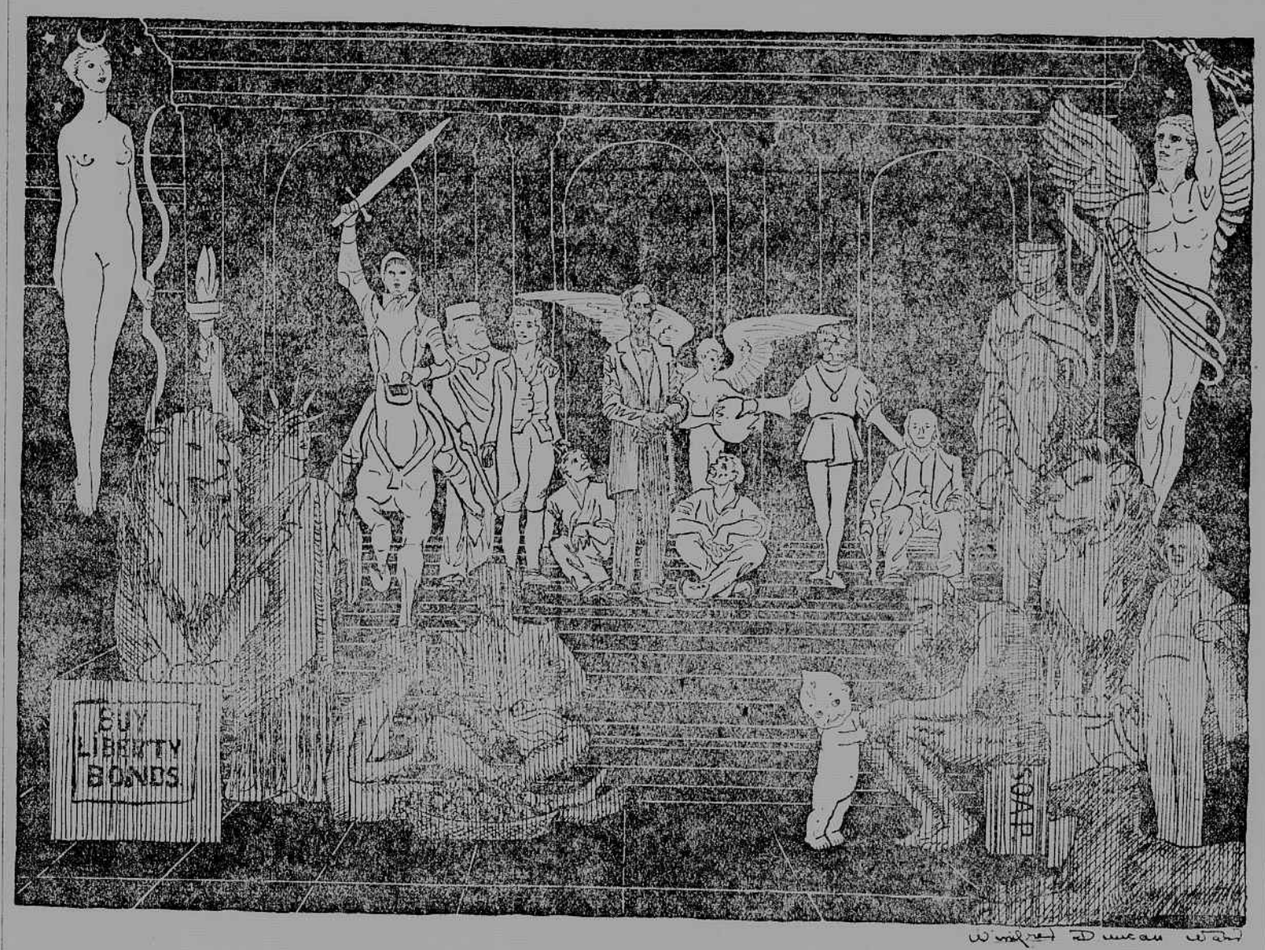
A Vision of New York as It Looks to Its Statues

A Vein of Sound Sense Under a Cover of Whimsical Jest

By Winifred Duncan Ward



THE other day Henry and I received through the mail the following announcement, engraved on thick white paper, and addressed to us both:

"You are cordially invited," said the card, "to attend the annual meeting of the New York Society of Sculpture, which will be held upon the steps of the New York Public Library, Forty-second Street and Fifth Avenue, at midnight of Friday, March 31, 1919."

"Fools!" said Henry, unfolding the morning paper, and then he added sharply: "What was that date?"

"They won't interfere with your meeting," said I soothingly, for with that intuition peculiar, the poets tell us, to a wife and mother, I had remembered that on March 31 Henry himself was booked to make a speech, not upon the steps, to be sure, but within the portals of the Public Library, where a group of French delegates were to be received and escorted from the library to Henry's club.

"I hate artists," he said bitterly. "They've got to hahve their meeting somewhere else."

"Oh, come now," said I soothingly, and I tore the offending card to pieces.

"Why," said Henry, "can't they have their meetings at ordinary hours, like other people? Why do they always have to be spectacular? Why must the steps of our library always be cluttered up with people? Why must we conduct our guests through a rabble of long-haired freaks?"

I pieced together the offending card, for it did seem to me rather queer that such a meeting should be held at midnight. The card said:

"There will be a programme of eighteen speeches by eighteen members of the association, representing eighteen districts of New York City. The meeting will, as usual, be opened by a distinguished guest from out of town, the guest of honor upon this occasion being Mr. George Gray Barnard's LINCOLN. Mr. Lincoln is sailing shortly for England, and this will be his last public appearance in this country. The other speakers for the evening will be as follows:

"I—Mr. Horace Greeley, from Park Row.

"II—Mlle. Jeanne d'Arc, from Riverside Drive.

"III—Miss Diana, from Madison Square.

"IV—Mr. William Shakespeare, from the Mall.

"V—Mr. James S. Stranahan, from Brooklyn.

"VI—The Statue of Liberty, from New York Harbor.

"VII—The Thinker, from the Metropolitan Museum.

"VIII—An Unknown Lady, from the Plaza.

"IX—Genius of Telegraphy, from the Telephone and Telegraph Building.

"X—Kewpie, representing the Woolworth Interests.

"XI—The Laborers who strike the Gong, from the Herald Building.

"XII—The Morgan Lionesses, from the Morgan Library.

"XIII—The Library Lions, from the New York Public Library.

"XIV—Signor Christopher Columbus, from Columbus Circle.

"XV—Signor Garibaldi, from Washington Square.

"XVI—Nathan Hale, from Wall Street.

"XVII—General Sherman, from Central Park.

"XVIII—Mr. Columbus's Boy Angel with a Globe.

"XIX—Mr. Sherman's Angel with the sword.

"XX—Mr. Abraham Lincoln, representing (in the absence of our President) the United States of America.

"Owing to the fact that the New York populace will be asleep while this meeting is being held, it is requested that all guests refrain from applause and all unnecessary noise."

Should I divulge to Henry the astounding discovery that this was a meeting, not of people, but of STATUES?

The night was clear and cold, and a few stars twinkled in the strip of midnight sky beneath which we scudded up the avenue. At Thirty-fourth Street we turned to the right, and up Madison Avenue to the little street that runs through to the very steps of the library—is it Forty-first Street, or has it a name all its own?—I cannot remember. At any rate, we found ourselves wedged in between twenty other machines which had also had this bright inspiration. Standing up in them I saw such a group of New York sculptors as has surely never before gathered in our city. Victor Brenner was there, and Daniel Chester French, and Mr. Macmonnies, who had come all the way up from Florida for the meeting; and since dark there had sprung up out of nowhere a grandstand, upon which were packed New York's legion of women sculptors.

In short, every one was there, and a hum of excitement filled the air. All were no doubt hoping, as I did, for a glimpse at least of the statues they had made themselves.

August wedged the machine in where I could see most clearly the entire front of the library and a little way up and down the avenue, and having buried me in furs prepared himself for slumber. I was glad, for I didn't want him telling Henry any tales about this excursion into the pleasures of my past.

The first thrill of excitement was when the Library Lions rose quietly from their pedestals and trotted off down the avenue. The crowd shrank back in awe and admiration as their huge forms loomed up in the moonlight.

"Where are they going?" inquired some one near me.

"They are going around to the Morgan Library," answered a voice—a man's, of course! What woman knows such things?

"What for?" asked the other voice, persistently. (It's his wife, said I to myself.)

"They are going to act as escort to the Morgan Lioness," said the man. "They live over on Madison Avenue and are not accustomed to going out after dark alone."

Diana Appears

Quite a crowd now gathered in the centre of the street, for it was rumored that something was going to happen up in the air. In a moment or so a cheer went up. It was Miss Diana, who, after much encouragement, stepped off her tower at Madison Square Garden and made a graceful flight, landing upon the curbstone in front of the five-and-ten-cent store.

When General Sherman and Joan of Arc rode down side by side from the park, their horses nervous from their long confinement, there was a cheer from many throats; but I did not join in it, for I was watching a quiet, stooped figure which stood in the thick of the jostling crowd quite near me. It was Abraham Lincoln. In spite of his height the eager crowd surged and pushed against him unnoticing, and I leaned forward to beg him to take refuge in my machine. As I did so he turned, so that the arc light shone full into his kind and shining face, which beamed upon the crowd with such tenderness and good nature that I decided he liked being with them best. So I never spoke to him after all, but a few minutes later the same tall figure slowly separated itself from the crowd and could be seen deliberately mounting the library steps. The groups of statues, who had been gathering from all over the city, parted at his approach.

The meeting was opened by Horace Greeley, who said:

"Friends: During the three years since this society was organized there has been a problem which we never could solve. For, in spite of the enthusiasm with which all our members have worked for the success of our undertaking, there was one question upon which we never could agree, and that was the question of speeches. The statues, one and all, refused to make speeches on the grounds that they were too shy or that they couldn't think of anything to say.

"I found it necessary to remind our members, and to remind them forcibly, that they are not here as statues, and that they were not being asked to speak as statues. They were being asked to speak as the representatives of beings greater than themselves, whose opinions and whose thoughts were, and still are, valuable public property. I pointed out that the opportunity to make these addresses should be embraced as a duty and as an honor.

"It therefore gives me great satisfaction to announce, that upon this, our third annual meeting, all of the eighteen members asked to speak accepted without protest. (Applause.)

"I have here a telegram from the Statue of Liberty, regretting that the arrival of two transports from France in the harbor to-night will make it impossible for her to leave her post. She has, however, sent her representative from the Automobile and Tire Company, on upper Broadway, whom we are glad to welcome into our midst. The first speaker of the evening will be the Library Lions, who are, respectively, the treasurer and secretary of our organization."

The lions rose upon their pedestals and bowed.

By good fortune, I had not forgotten my opera glasses, and I took the moment now afforded to scan the assembly on the steps.

An amazing succession of groups met my eye.

Diana and the Genius of Telegraph—a handsome boy—hovered above the throng like spirits; the red glare from the Statue of Liberty's torch lit up the tips of their wings, and glanced across the columns of the Library building behind. Diana and the handsome youth were very much absorbed in each other, and seemed to be passing wireless messages to and fro, accompanied by very coy nods and smiles. Diana was a most enchanting creature, and I quite agreed with a stone-cutter near me who said with feeling:

"Gee, ain't it a shame for a sweet girl like that to be stuck up in the air all by herself? Say—look at the Bolshevik gettin' next to Mr. Lincoln. I bet they're askin' him to give 'em their rights an' tear down the governmint."

Mr. Lincoln was engaged in earnest conversation with two rough looking men in leather aprons, whom I now recognized as the bronze men who strike the gong on the Herald building. Apparently he said something which satisfied them, for they presently sat down at his feet, and watched him attentively throughout the rest of the evening, like two faithful dogs that expect a reward later on.

"See those horrid men bothering Mr. Lincoln with their vulgar labor grievances," said a rich and very superior voice quite near me. I leaned out of the machine to see, and found that two of the statues (late arrivals), had paused beside the machine and were, like myself, watching the crowd upon the steps.

One of them was the Unknown Lady, who stands upon the top of the fountain in front of the Plaza; her companion was no less a person than William Shakespeare.

Plaint of the Morgan Lionesses

After reading the minutes and reporting the finances of the society the secretary gave way to the treasurer, who tossed back his mane, and, licking his vast paw in a reflective manner, said:

"Ladies and Gentlemen: To open our meeting with a complaint is not, perhaps, in the best form; nevertheless, I have here a complaint from the Morgan Lionesses. They are dissatisfied with their job at the Morgan Library and wish to be transferred to the esplanade of the Public Library behind us, on the ground that they will have here more chance for advancement.

"The city hoped, when it placed them with the Morgan interests, that they would find it congenial and refined work suitable for lady lions. The neighborhood and the associations are of the best.

"They tell me, however, that, although they appreciate the opportunity we have given them of associating with high life, they feel that it leads to nothing. Moreover, they are lonely, and they complain bitterly that it is their right as women to have children to associate with. They say that we are continually being climbed over by children. They, on the contrary, never see one.

"On the other hand, we fear that the lionesses are not sufficiently robust to stand the wear and tear of life in front of the Public Library, and there also arises the question of what they do and do not owe to the Morgan firm which first employed them and to which they owe their social position. We will take a vote upon the question. Those in favor of complying with the request of the lionesses please say 'Aye.'"

And every one said "Aye."

"Voted and passed," said the secretary, and the lions and the lionesses shook hands and bowed to each other with the utmost cordiality.

The next speaker on the programme was Diana. She was so shy that she had to be pushed forward by the Genius of Telegraphy, who hovered near her in a chivalrous manner, as though to protect her from the crowd. When she began to speak every one shouted "Louder! Louder!" which nearly frightened her off the steps, but finally she spoke as follows:

"Dear Friends: I want to thank you all for feeding my pigeons at Madison Square Garden. All through the war you have not forgotten them, even when you hadn't enough food yourselves. I am so grateful, and I have been very happy on the tower, and shall always think of it as my home, but I would like very much, if you don't mind, to have a little holiday. You see, in summer the Garden gets pretty rough, and what with the circus and the dog show and then all the prizefights it really isn't a nice place for a lady, and if it's all the same to you I'd like to spend August on the Woolworth Building."

A shout of laughter greeted this proposal, for every one knows that the tower of the Woolworth Building is just face to face with the tower of the Telephone and Telegraph Company, and goodness only knows how full the air would be of wireless messages from peak to peak.

Diana retired, blushing very much and looking for protection to the Genius of Telegraphy, who came down to earth with a bang, and, taking her hand in his, stepped well forward into the light, with his curls blowing in the breeze, and said in a clear, manly voice:

"I want to say that I agree with Diana that Madison Square in the heat of summer is no place for her, and that because of the sea winds that sweep around the Woolworth Building you should send her there for her health as soon as you can." (Laughter and applause.)

The next speaker was Mr. James A. Stranahan, a little old man who had been standing nervously among the lions, although his nervousness seemed caused more by an apprehension about drafts than by the proximity of his fierce neighbors. He carried a heavy overcoat on his arm; in the other hand his tall top hat.

"My friends," said he in a little dry voice, which sounded like the rustling of leaves, "without seeming to be irreverent, may I venture to hope that our enthusiastic young friend who has just addressed you will in the course of his discoveries devise some method of intercommunication between me and my audiences by means of which they will be enabled to hear what I say? (Applause). And in the absence of such a device may I ask you to step a little nearer?" There was a great surging toward the steps, occasioning a great deal of activity among the police. He continued peacefully:

"From the spirit world to the upper end of Brooklyn is rather a drop, my friends—and having got so far, will you drop back still further with me—say, eighty years, to the time when the Commission on Parks did me the honor to make me president? When we gathered together to discuss the great project of laying out Prospect Park I found that our interests were at variance. They were absorbed in the practical details of laying out a park. I, on the other hand, was absorbed in the romantic idea of making the park so interesting and unusual that New York would come over to look at it. In short, I was in the position of the little girl who went into a meat store and stood there with ten cents in her hand.

"'Wha'y'want?' said the butcher, 'soup meat?'

"'No, sir,' said the little girl.

"'Bacon?' said the butcher.

"'No, sir,' said the little girl.

"'Steak?' said the butcher.

"'No, sir,' said the little girl.

"'Well, what do you want?' said the exasperated butcher.

"'Well,' said the little girl, 'I want an automobile, but mother wants ten cents' worth of liver.'

"That was my dream for Prospect Park: to achieve for it something unusual, and not just what every one expected a park to achieve, but to plant, in its very heart a jewel which should make all Manhattan come over the ferry to see.

"It was not my good fortune to succeed in this ambition, for the jewel of Brooklyn was established, in spite of my efforts, outside the park instead of inside it. But, my friends, the jewel is there, and I am glad to say is only a half mile out of the park.

"The jewel of which I speak is the Children's Museum. New York has nothing like it; no city in the United States has anything like it. Time was when I was glad of this; now I am less provincial, and instead of boasting that Brooklyn has a children's museum and New York has not, I say instead that the children who play in Central Park ought to have a children's museum and that your park will not be complete until it is there."

Joan of Arc's Speech

The little man gave place with a low bow, and amid much friendly applause, to Joan of Arc. She was in full armor—her face shining under its helmet. When the applause which greeted her stopped she said in a clear, loud voice:

"Dear Friends: I see by the papers that France is going to 'canonize me'—that is, I am to be made a saint. I am glad, my friends, that this honor has not yet come to me, for much as I appreciate the tribute, I had rather speak to you all here to-night as a girl than as a saint. I want to thank you for what you have done for my country—especially I want to thank the American women, for to them is our country's debt the greatest. I had but one life to give France; you had thousands of lives to give; the moment when you gave them was one of the great moments of history.

Jeanne's sword flashed in the moonlight and from a thousand American throats came the response:

"Vive la France!"

The next speakers were the Herald Square Laborers. They took turns speaking, standing side by side and looking very earnest.

"Ladies and gents," said the taller of the two—the one who hits the gong upon the right hand side—"what we got to say ain't for ourselves only; it's for all the poor guys what does newspaper work, which we can honestly say is our profession, as if it weren't for us bein' always on the job none of the reporters would ever know what time it was, which would in its turn hold up the presses."

"Git to the point, Bob," interrupted his companion nervously.

"I am gittin' there. Lemme alone," replied the other in an undertone audible to every one.

"That's right, Bill, treat 'em rough," called a stone cutter out of the crowd. (Laughter.)

"What I say is," continued Bob, "that with all these here strikes for shorter hours goin' on in every country in the world, an' from guys who only work nine hours a day as 'tis, it's enough to make us, who works twenty-five hours out o' every twenty-four, sit up an' take notice. Now, we can't strike for shorter hours, although I was discussin' that very point just now between Mr. Lincoln an' my pal here. He's all for a strike for shorter hours, he is, but I think Mr. Lincoln has the right of it when he says that it ain't fair for the porcupine to try to live in the same size hole as the prairie dog. It can't be done; one has got a bigger job than the other, an' has got to live up to it, by which I mean that the daily press is a bigger job than workin' in the subway an' ought to be made sacrifices for accordin'."

"That ain't so," yelled the shrill voice of a female ticket chopper from the crowd, but Bill was ready for her.

"Yes it is so, miss, an' if you don't believe it you come an' hit that there 'Herald' clock with this here hammer twenty-four times a day. Come along—come right on up an' give us a demonstration."

The lady in question having thus been effectually silenced for life, he ended:

"This bein' as it is, I say the press of this here city ought to get a raise in wages, an' time an' a half as well." (Cheers from the crowd.)

Unfortunate Accident

What Bob's views were are not recorded, for a commotion now arose in regard to the next speaker, who was Rodin's statue of The Thinker.

He had been sitting motionless all the evening at the bottom of the steps, chin in hand, and now, in spite of what Mr. Greeley had so optimistically stated, the Thinker absolutely refused, it was reported, to make a speech.

The reason he gave was that after thinking it over he had nothing to say. There was general consternation and embarrassment among the speakers, but the crowd howled with joy at this novelty in the programme, and began throwing flowers and American flags all over The Thinker.

"Good for you, old boy!" shouted a voice.

"Send him over to the peace conference!" yelled another, and this suggestion so upset and embarrassed The Thinker (who really seemed not to wish publicity, if such a thing is possible in America) that he accidentally put his foot on the Kewpie, which immediately began to howl at the top of its lungs.

As Jeanne was in armor she could not take him, so the Statue of Liberty was obliged to do so, handing her torch to James S. Stranahan, who, in his turn, was obliged to ask Shakespeare to hold his coat and top hat, which that gentleman did with the greatest good nature. The Kewpie's toe was not seriously hurt, but it was thought best to call a physician. The nearest was Dr. Simms, who stood on a pedestal in the park behind the library; and, although he had modestly declined to attend the meeting on the plea that he was not sufficiently eminent, Miss Diana was sent around the corner to urge him to attend the Kewpie, and, being utterly unable to resist her wiles, he came, and, having done up Kewpie's toe, remained, to the gratification of all concerned.

This little episode having ended satisfactorily, the next speaker was announced, and it was Horace Greeley, the venerable founder of The New York Tribune.

"Fellow citizens," he said, "it is a great honor to be among you to-night, in such distinguished company; and what I want to say is very much in line with what Mlle. Jeanne here was saying a moment ago. France and America are bound together now with the ties of blood as well as the ties of friendship; our democracy has taken a new turn in the light of the world war and in the light of the peace conference now in progress. No longer is it democracy for America, but democracy for the world. We all feel it; it's in our blood; it's in the air; no temporary revolutions, my friends, no temporary discords, can stem the flow of this great tide which is bearing us into new worlds. In the industry, the amusements, the public assemblages of every great city one feels this stir of new hopes, new affiliations, new friendships. And the daily press—that great organ of the people—what part is it going to play in the new drama? Has it kept pace with the times? Is the paper as vital a part of your daily life as the automat—as the movies? It ought to be, my friends. If it isn't, there's something the matter with it.

All in Proof That Our Statues Do Still Live and Serve

"You all know the story of the public school teacher whose class gave a demonstration on the Fourth of July, the programme reading:

"'My Country 'Tis of Thee'—song rendered by Sulamith Sokolski.

"'Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean'—recitation by Pat O'Reilly.

"'Home, Sweet Home'—solo by Vincenzo Billotti.'

"That, my friends, is my ambition for the press of America. Seven columns in seven languages on every page, and every good American able to read all seven." (Applause.)

At this moment the cold voice of August said in my ear.

"Madame, it is half past 4; I had orders to have you home not later than 3," and without waiting for my reply the machine burst into a fearful noise and ploughed its way out of the crowd, drowning, I am very much afraid, some of the sacred utterances of dear old Mr. Greeley. I was too dazed to protest. Moreover, a final adventure awaited me; for, as we swung around the corner of Twenty-third Street and Madison Avenue I cried to August:

"Oh, stop—stop—I see some one I know."

For there, standing upon the curb all alone, and waiting for a chance to cross the street, was my Monk, whom I had made with my own hands so many years before. He had his illuminated manuscript, which I had given him, under his arm, and was still dressed in the terra cotta robe with the stiff folds of which I had had so much trouble. Behind him trotted his little girl-angel, carrying her lute, and she laughed up at me just as she had laughed the day I made her.

"Oh, I'm so glad to see you," I cried, holding out my hand. "Do you remember me?"

"Indeed I do, Mrs. Ward," replied the Monk, "and how have you been, and how is the dear cat Lilith?" We besieged each other with questions.

"Where are you living?" I cried, "and do your people ever send you both to exhibitions the way I used to, and do you still get broken every time?"

"Oh, yes," he said, trying to answer one question at a time, "we do not go out much, but we see a great deal of society, for we are still with the gentleman who bought us in the beginning; he has a charming house in a district named Chelsea and entertains a great deal. Gabrielle and I are kept in the big living room on top of an old Italian whatnot. We like it very much, don't we, Gabrielle?"

"But you liked better being with me, didn't you?" I called (for August was sternly moving on).

"Oh, yes, lady," said my Monk, with a sweet Italian chivalry—"we will always like that best."

We waved our hands till the machine turned a corner, and Monk and Angel and all that mystic throng were lost from sight.

A Sob for the Sob Sister

By Sarah Addington

THE boys up at Albany have gone and done it again! They have just decreed that "women newspaper workers" (slang for sob sisters) "are exempt from the provisions of the labor law in relation to hours of labor of minors and women"—and, blop! goes another dream scattering.

For this means that those females who are dragging their young lives out on a morning newspaper, working by night and sleeping by day, are never to have respite. The lawmakers see to that. Conductorettes and elevatrices are protected; they have their nights free for front parlor sessions and church suppers. But the poor old woman reporter, she is exempt, and, gosh, how she dreads it!

For she had always hoped that somebody would do something about her. She has always known she was a social problem, that her life was "abnormal," and that when the great public once woke up to her there would be a law, or something, and she could be a human again. But the great opportunity has come and gone, and she is now doomed for life.

Because, of course, newspapers have to have "women workers." Who would write the Christmas stories, or the lost children stories, or those epics that are born on the East Side? Who would be there to tell the copyreader the difference between Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt and Miss Alice Paul?—a suffragist is a suffragist to the male mind, and that's the end of the business. Who would tell the court reporter the name of the stuff the beautiful murderess has her clothes made of? "I never know cretonne from crêpe de chine," he confesses helplessly. Who would take care of the annual family of office kittens? Who would go to all the summer benefits? Who would do the church notices? And who would "oh!" and "ah!" at the photographs of all the sweetest babies in the world, whose fathers, strangely enough, are all reporters?

The answer is, Nobody; but a sob sister isn't a nobody, so perhaps it's all right, after all.

The New Memorial Day, 1919

To Joyce Kilmer, Typical Soldier in the New Army of the Dead

By Eleanor Rogers Cox

FLOWERS for your grave, and an immortal flower
Of song to crown your name,
That God hath set within His skies forever
Above men's praise or blame.
Above the battle-flames a white star shining,
Above the Titan-strife
Of Death-joined hosts, a Death-defying symbol
Of Love and Song and Life.

Of Love—the fine word in its fairest meaning
Of human brotherhood—
As Jesus preached it, as St. Francis lived it,
As Dickens understood:
The blossom ultimate of man's progression—
The light-illumined thought
That of its own nobility created
The nobleness it sought.

Of Song—no life of all that in God's morning
Draws young impassioned breath,
But takes from yours more ardent pulse of living,
Fresh armament 'gainst Death.
For one your soul was with all forces living—
Work, Friendship, Loveliness:
And these within its lyric transmutation
Still live and lead and bless.

Of Life—what fresh divinity of meaning,
Of new-won bravery,
Enwreathes because of you, O Poet-brother,
The whole wide world to-day!
And sacrifice that seemed too great for thinking,
Illumined by that grace,
Becomes by strength of all you dreamed and died for,
A singing commonplace.

So not for you the dirge of lamentation—
But a great triumph-chaunt,
For that before the splendor of your going
Death yields his final vaunt.
Along the crystal ramparts of the morning
The answering bugles call—
Where freed from earth's enthralment walk God's knighthood,
Sun-bright and angel-tall.